

**UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT
SOUTHERN DISTRICT OF FLORIDA**

CASE NO. 24-MJ-6041-AOV

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

v.

RONALD ZAPETE,

Defendant.

CRIMINAL COVER SHEET

1. Did this matter originate from a matter pending in the Northern Region of the United States Attorney's Office prior to August 8, 2014 (Mag. Judge Shaniek M. Maynard)? No
2. Did this matter originate from a matter pending in the Central Region of the United States Attorney's Office prior to October 3, 2019 (Mag. Judge Jared M. Strauss)? No
3. Did this matter involve the participation of or consultation with now Magistrate Judge Eduardo I. Sanchez during his tenure at the U.S. Attorney's Office, which concluded on January 22, 2023? No

Respectfully submitted,

MARKENZY LAPOINTE
UNITED STATES ATTORNEY

By: /s/ Daniel Rosenfeld
Daniel Rosenfeld
Assistant United States Attorney
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AO 91 (Rev. 08/09) Criminal Complaint

UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT

for the

Southern District of Florida

United States of America

v.

Ronald Zapete

Case No. 24-mj-6041-AOV

Defendant(s)

CRIMINAL COMPLAINT BY TELEPHONE OR OTHER RELIABLE ELECTRONIC MEANS

I, the complainant in this case, state that the following is true to the best of my knowledge and belief.

On or about the date(s) of October 20, 2023 in the county of Miami-Dade in the
Southern District of Florida, the defendant(s) violated:

Code Section

Offense Description

18 U.S.C. § 922(e)

Delivering Firearms Without a License

This criminal complaint is based on these facts:

SEE ATTACHED AFFIDAVIT.

☒ Continued on the attached sheet.

Matthew Castillo

Complainant's signature

Matthew Castillo, Special Agent, HSI

Printed name and title

Attested to by the Applicant in accordance with the requirements of Fed.R.Crim.P. 4.1 by Facetime

Date: 1/29/2024

Alicia O. Valle

Judge's signature

City and state: Fort Lauderdale, Florida

Honorable Alicia O. Valle, United States Magistrate Judge

Printed name and title

AFFIDAVIT IN SUPPORT OF CRIMINAL COMPLAINT

I, Matthew Castillo, being duly sworn, hereby depose and state the following:

INTRODUCTION AND AGENT BACKGROUND

1. I am a Special Agent with the U.S. Department of Homeland Security, Homeland Security Investigations ("HSI"). I joined HSI in April 2021. I obtained a bachelor's degree in criminal justice and a minor degree in psychology from Florida State University. I have experience working for the federal government in enforcement and investigations since 2013. I have participated in training programs related to the investigation of the exportation and smuggling of illegal contraband and/or merchandise including firearms and ammunition outside of the United States. I have participated in investigations and subsequent arrests of suspects involved in export violation offenses. As a law enforcement officer within the meaning of Section 2510(7) of Title 18, United States Code, I am empowered by law to conduct investigations of and make arrests for offenses enumerated in Titles 18, 19, 21, 31 and 46 of the United States Code.

2. The information contained in this affidavit is submitted for the sole purpose of establishing probable cause that on or about October 20, 2023, Ronald ZAPETE ("ZAPETE") did knowingly cause to be delivered to a contract carrier for transportation in foreign commerce, to persons other than licensed importers or manufacturers, a package that contained firearms and ammunition, in violation of Title 18, United States Code, Section 922(e). Title 18, United States Code, Section 922(e) prohibits knowingly and willfully delivering or causing to be delivered a package or container containing firearms or ammunition to a common or contract carrier, if the package or container was intended for transportation in foreign commerce, and if the package or container was intended to be

transported to someone other than a licensed importer, licensed manufacturer, licensed dealer, or licensed collector, and if written notice was not provided to the carrier that firearms or ammunition were being transported or shipped.

3. Because this affidavit is being submitted for the limited purpose of establishing probable cause, it does not contain all the information known to me and other law enforcement officers involved in this investigation. The facts and information contained in this affidavit are based on my personal knowledge and observations, as well as information received in my official capacity from other individuals, including other law enforcement officers involved in this investigation.

PROBABLE CAUSE

4. On or about October 9, 2023, according to a federally-licensed-firearm dealer's records, Co-Conspirator 1 purchased three firearms in Dania Beach, in the Southern District of Florida.

5. On or about October 18, 2023, according to Company 1's call records, ZAPETE called Company 1 and placed an order with Company 1 to ship a container of goods from an address in North Miami, in the Southern District of Florida, to an address in the Dominican Republic. Company 1 is a common or contract carrier. ZAPETE did not disclose to Company 1 that the shipment would contain firearms. ZAPETE used a false shipping profile with a fake name.

6. On or about October 20, 2023, Company 1 accepted the shipping container from the same address in North Miami, in the Southern District of Florida. When Company 1 accepted the shipping container, ZAPETE was present, provided his Spanish ID, signed an

invoice, and, as part of signing the invoice, affirmed that he knew Company 1's policies prohibited shipping firearms.

7. Between October 20, 2023 and October 31, 2023, Company 1 transported the shipping container to the Dominican Republic.

8. On or about October 31, 2023, the Dominican Republic General Directorate of Customs inspected the shipping container. Inside, it found three undeclared firearms. The firearms were found inside a bag of rice located inside a cardboard box alongside other household goods. According to export documents, the shipper of the package was Co-Conspirator 1, and the ultimate consignee was Co-Conspirator 2. Co-Conspirator 2 is not a licensed importer, licensed manufacturer, licensed dealer, or licensed collector of firearms.

9. On or about November 6, 2023, law enforcement confirmed through the ATF e-Trace database that two of the three firearms recovered in the Dominican Republic had serial numbers matching those purchased by Co-Conspirator 1 on or about October 9, 2023 in Dania, Florida, in the Southern District of Florida.

10. On or about January 29, 2024, law enforcement interviewed ZAPETE at Fort Lauderdale International Airport. ZAPETE read and acknowledged his understanding of his *Miranda* rights, waived those rights, and agreed to speak with agents. During questioning, ZAPETE admitted that he called Company 1 to place order the order. He further admitted that, between October 18, 2023 and October 20, 2022, he took possession of two of the three recently-purchased firearms from Co-Conspirator 1, along with a third firearm.

11. ZAPETE also admitted that, on or about October 20, 2023, he placed three firearms in a shipping container and that he hid the firearms inside an open bag of rice to hide them from employees of Company 1.

12. ZAPETE admitted that he knew it was illegal to ship firearms out of the United States and that he expected to receive approximately \$5,000 from someone in the Dominican Republic when the guns arrived there.

CONCLUSION

13. Based on the forgoing, I respectfully submit that there is probable cause to support a criminal complaint against ZAPETE for violation of Title 18, United States Code, Section 922(e).

FURTHER YOUR AFFIANT SAYETH NAUGHT.

Matthew Castillo

MATTHEW CASTILLO
SPECIAL AGENT
HOMELAND SECURITY INVESTIGATIONS

Attested to by the applicant in
accordance with the requirements of
Fed. R. Crim. P. 4.1 by Facetime this
29th day of January, 2024.

Alicia O. Valle

HONORABLE ALICIA O. VALLE
UNITED STATES MAGISTRATE JUDGE